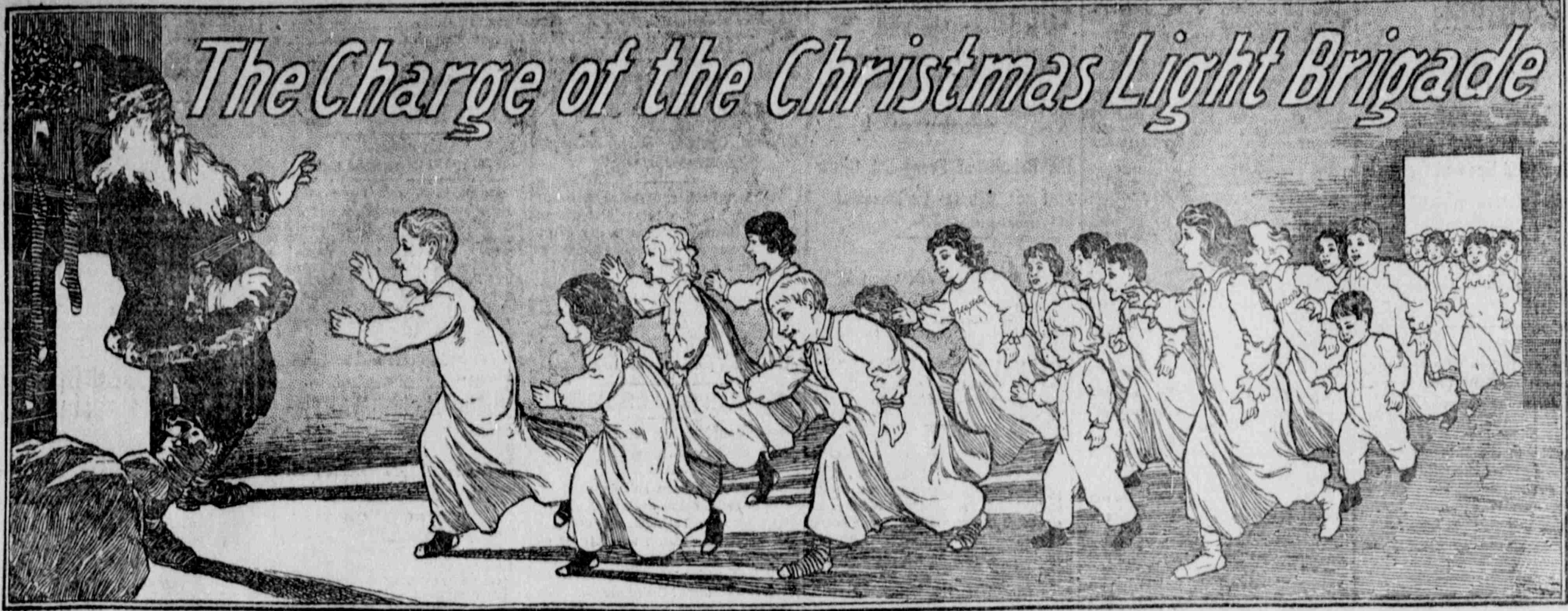


The Charge of the Christmas Light Brigade



THE SOURCE OF SOME CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS

WHILE Christmas is, of course, still primarily thought of as the birthday of Christ, some of the modern methods of celebrating the day are not strictly those of the land and countries in which He lived. These methods are rather an outgrowth of the customs and traditions of the tawny-haired northern races of Europe, those imaginative and sun-loving peoples who gave to us both Santa Claus and the Christmas tree.

The very name Christmas is of comparatively recent origin, though there is a remnant of the old heathen time in the term Yuletide, for some time now obsolete. Among the old Teutons Yuletide was the highest festival, as it was also among the Saxons when they still dwelt in northern Germany and before they had left the snow-carpeted castles of their home-land gods.



beaming warmly down, as it did in sunny Italy and summer-steeped Greece. When all the northern world was held in fetters of ice and snow, it was naturally a welcome sight to our heathen ancestors when the sun changed his retreating course and, turning wrathfully on the icy foe who had followed him, drove the usurper back to his palace of ice. Then the days grew longer and the nights shorter, and heat and warmth returned to the earth, and the first promontions of the distant spring filled the earth. It was no wonder that the people of the frozen fords and ice covered rivers and dark forests of the north then grew light hearted and rejoiced.

This winter solstice was supposed to take place about the 25th of December, and from the evening of the 24th day of December to the 4th day of January extended the period known as Twelve Nights, during which the change in the zodiac was celebrated with all manner of festival and merry-making. Among those rough and chummy sons of Vikings and warriors joy found its expression in odd and grotesque creations and games, many of which have come down to us, though strangely altered.

It was during the Twelve Nights that the Spirit Hunter rode through the air, wakening all the life slumbering in nature by his magic storm song. Odin, as the Spirit Hunter, is the most ancient conception of this deity among the different Teutonic tribes and is common to all of them. In England the Wild Hunt many centuries later was sometimes called Herlething, and the story is told of the king, Herla, who was imprisoned in a mountain for 300 years by a dwarf and was later doomed to ride for all time on the winds.

Now, it was a common resource among the early Christian missionaries when they found the beliefs of the northern pagans too deep rooted to be overcome to magnify the more terrible

attributes of their original gods and by so doing eventually dethrone them from popular favor. So the primitive significance of Odin was lost. But imagine the person of this god as he appeared to the Teuton folk of old! He is described as an old man with a

broad brimmed hat is pressed down over his eyes. On the night before Christmas he rides about over the land. There you are! Odin and our Santa Claus are one and the same person.

To the same origin may be traced our

of the early Teutons and did not come from either the south or the east, because no such custom or emblem was ever known in those parts of the world. The first Christmas tree, in fact, was put up in some dusky German forest of the far north and was not a medium



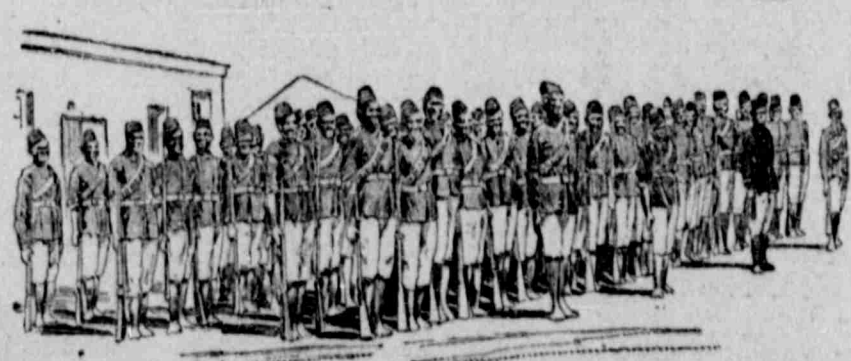
THE FIRST CHRISTMAS TREE.

long white beard and a vigorous frame. A dark cloak bespangled with gold stars hangs over his shoulder, and a

Christmas tree, resplendent with its colors and candles. It is nothing more or less than a relic of the sun worship

of benevolence to the young, but an expression of adoration for that great god of the Northmen, the sun.

THE POLICE FORCE OF BULAWAYO.



One of the secrets of Great Britain's success as a colonizing power is her principle of always taking the native born, after his territory has been annexed, and converting him into a fighting machine for the protection and patrolling of his own land. The accompanying illustration, for instance, shows the Matabele police force at Bulawayo, a body of well drilled soldiers, drawn entirely from the native population. These men not only police Matabeleland during times of peace, but form a reserve guard to be called on when native uprisings beyond the border threaten the peace of the colony, and have won much admiration for their coolness and bravery during active service.

A MINIATURE OF QUEEN ANNE.

The revival of the miniature craze has brought into prominence many old and interesting specimens of this delicate handiwork, of which a number are owned by wealthy Americans. One of the most valuable and at the same time unique miniatures owned in America is an old one of Queen Anne of England, the property of a collector in New York. Although the work on this portrait is not so delicate as that of the usual miniature of the period, the little tablet has numerous historical associations that give it a value of its own. The character of the small painting may be realized from the accompanying illustration.



SMALL ITEMS OF INTEREST.

Berlin has 229 common schools. Seventeen are Catholic.

Those who cannot write English cannot land in Western Australia.

A Sicilian advocate charged with fraud was recently sentenced to 189 years' imprisonment.

A "Messiah" at Samara, Russia, has

selected as his special ministrants "ten wise virgins."

Opium eating is described as making serious ravages among the working people in the fen district of Hants and Cambridgeshire in England.

Some one figures out that if Great Britain now had on hand an insurrec-

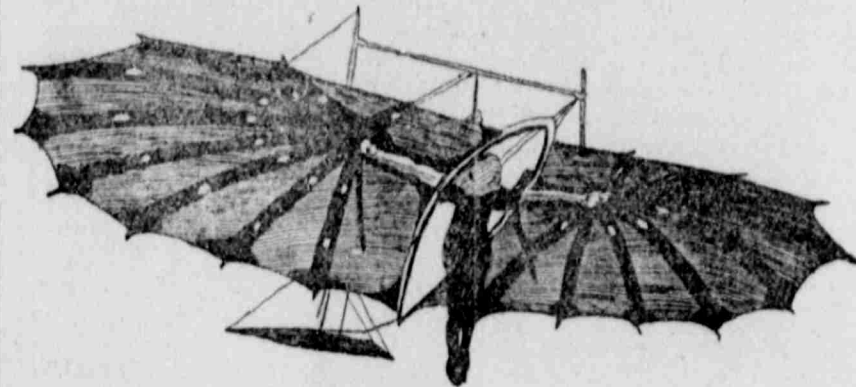
tion in India, a rebellion in Australia, rioting in Ireland and a row in Canada, it would, in addition to the war in South Africa, have its hands full.

The life sized bronze equestrian statue of Frederick the Great by J. L. Gerome, the French sculptor, which he will exhibit at the Paris exposition has been purchased by Peter Gibson of Cincinnati, and immediately after the ex-

position it will be shipped to this country.

The emperor of China is never seen walking, riding or driving. When he takes an airing, it is in a palanquin eight feet long carried by 32 gayly dressed servants, who advance at a swift trot. Before he goes out for this airing the roads are sprinkled with yellow sand, and after the sprinkling the

A FLYING MACHINE THAT CAN FLY.



There have been flying machines without end, but few indeed are such contrivances which have really shown any ability to soar off into the clouds. The accompanying illustration, however, shows Picher's gliding machine, which met with comparative success during experiments carried on before the untimely death of its inventor. The principle of the gliding machine's flight is that of the aeroplane, the idea being that the wings of the contrivance would keep its body, together with the weight of the operator, suspended by the pressure of the air so long as the wings had a sufficient velocity in a forward direction.

A FIGHTER'S SON FOR AFRICA.

"Cook's son, duke's son and son of a belted earl"—all of the best of the young men of England are now off in South Africa. It seems, fighting against the Boers. Some of the best families in England have cheerfully volunteered for service, and many of them have al-



ready been targets for the sharpshooters of the Transvaal. One of the most popular and best known young Englishmen to go to the front lately was Hon. F. Roberts, the son of Lord Roberts, generally known as "Bobs," the most popular general in the British army. This fighting son of a fighting general is a staff officer with Buller and promises to follow in the footsteps of his father in his pursuit of military glory.

FREE TELEPHONES.

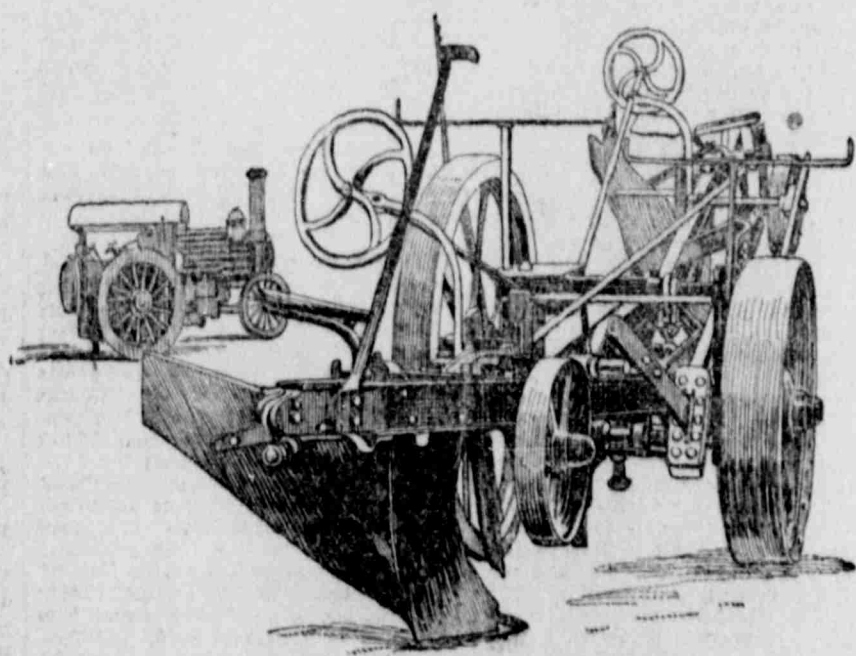
In some towns of Germany the telephone is introduced by tobaccoists as an additional attraction to customers. Any one who buys a cigar may, if he desires, speak over the tobaccoist's instrument.

AFTER THE CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVITIES.



Tommy—Hey, Mr. Santa Claus, are you going back to the north pole?
Santa Claus (alias Philip Goodbody)—Y-y-yes, my little man.
Tommy—Then I wish you'd let my pa catch on to your sleigh. He's a north pole explorer, and he'll never get there if you don't take him.

TRENCH MAKING BY STEAM.



In that greatest of businesses, modern warfare, machinery continues to play an ever greater and more important part. Time was when the soldier dug his trenches with a spade bayonet, and tedious and difficult work it was. In up to date warfare all this is changed, for hereafter progressive nations will use the steam trench maker, a picture of which is shown in the accompanying illustration. This huge steam plow for cutting trenches was invented by Colonel Trenchard of the Royal Engineers and is being made use of for the first time by British officers in South Africa. This plow is hauled by a large traction engine and can turn up several miles of trenches in a very few hours.

THE FAST MAIL OF THE YUKON.

Both Uncle Sam's and Canada's mail bags are still hauled back and forth through Alaska and the Klondike by huskies, as the trained sleigh hauling dogs of the north are called. As will be seen from the accompanying picture, a



mail sleigh has six huskies hauling it as a rule, and many a dreary mile they and their driver have to traverse through the frozen wildernesses of the Yukon so that snowbound miners may have their occasional news from the rest of the world.

of the temperature and the entire suffocation of the conflagration.
T. W. Davis of Peoria, Ill., now 73 years old, a noted cyclist, who has won several medals for riding long distances and has ridden 50,000 miles since his sixty-first birthday, is erecting for himself in a cemetery at Peoria a monument, the shaft of which bears a carved representation of a bicycle.

CAPE COLONY VOLUNTEERS.

Spectators of the war in South Africa have commented on the difference in appearance between the British regulars who have gone down to the Cape to take part in the fighting and the troops who were raised in Cape Colony at the beginning of hostilities. These latter soldiers are a rough and



A NEW CUBAN STAMP.

The most striking of the newly issued series of postage stamps for Cuba is the 10 centavo stamp, a picture of which is here shown. The design on this stamp is the scene of a Cuban native plowing a level field with a yoke of oxen, and in view of the era of reconstruction which Cuba has at the present time entered upon there is an especial appropriateness in such a design. This stamp has already proved a favorite with philatelists and is recognized as one of the handsomest of the stamps recently issued.

